United Nations A/68/223

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 July 2013

Original: English

Sixty-eighth session
Item 53 of the provisional agenda*
Comprehensive review of special political missions

Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

This report is submitted pursuant to resolution 67/123, whereby the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including their evolution and trends, as well as their role in the activities of the Organization relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, and to make recommendations to increase their overall transparency and effectiveness.

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13-41359 (E) 230813

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I. Introduction

1. At the heart of conflict, more often than not, are political issues. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that political missions have been at the very centre of United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security since the establishment of the Organization. From the deployment of Count Folke Bernadotte to the Middle East in 1948 to the establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia in 2013, political missions have, in different forms, played a vital role in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

2. In partnership with other actors, those missions have accompanied Member States through historic times of change: from supporting the decolonization and independence processes in Africa and Asia to assisting Central America in ending its civil wars and building peace in the 1990s; from facilitating the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan in 2001 to aiding Nepal in its transition to peace and democracy; from assisting Libyans in organizing their first elections in almost 50 years to helping Somalia open its most hopeful chapter in a generation.

3. In the 1990s, those missions became collectively known as special political missions. In the two decades that followed, special political missions have grown significantly in number, size and the complexity of the mandates they are asked to implement. While many of their core functions stem from the early days of the Organization, the range of tasks carried out by these missions today is unprecedented, and a reflection of the growing importance Member States attach to this instrument.

4. While special political missions vary widely in their functional roles and characteristics, they can be broadly defined as United Nations civilian missions that are deployed for a limited duration to support Member States in good offices, conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. They have been grouped in three main categories, or clusters, namely, special envoys; sanctions panels and monitoring groups; and field-based missions. This distinction will be used for the purposes of this report (see section III for a more detailed discussion).

5. This is my first thematic report on special political missions to the General Assembly. As requested in resolution 67/123, this report provides information on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including their evolution and trends, as well as their role in the activities of the Organization relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. It also contains recommendations to increase their overall transparency and effectiveness.

II. Historical evolution of special political missions

6. Although the term "special political missions" emerged only in the 1990s, the history of United Nations civilian missions with political functions goes back much further. Political missions have carried out good offices, conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding functions since the early days of the Organization, fulfilling the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and other world leaders often referred to those deployments as "special missions" or "United Nations presences". Those early experiences built a solid foundation for the special political missions we see today.

7. The historical evolution of political missions has three distinct eras: a first period of new mission design (1948-early 1960s); a second period of relative inactivity (late 1960s-late 1980s), and a third period of rediscovery (post-cold war). This evolution was part of a broader trend of increased reliance by the United Nations on different mechanisms to promote and sustain peace and security. The evolution of peacekeeping followed a similar historical trajectory.

8. The period from the creation of the United Nations until the early 1960s was a fertile one for the design of a range of new missions. As a new institution, the United Nations was required to build and refine tools that could help to address emerging issues confronting the international community, from mediating disputes in the Middle East and South Asia to supporting the transition to independence in post-colonial States. Political missions were one of the instruments that were developed during that period.

9. In 1948, the first United Nations mediator was appointed, when the General Assembly mandated a Mediator in Palestine (Count Folke Bernadotte) to work alongside the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.[1] Since then, successive Secretaries-General have deployed the services of high-level mediators or other envoys, either upon the request of the General Assembly or the Security Council, or in the context of the Secretary-General's good offices mandate.

10. In that period, the Organization also designed a number of field missions. They included small political offices that carried out facilitation tasks, such as the United Nations presence in Jordan, established by the General Assembly in 1958. Its purpose was described as "watching local developments, holding a finger on the pulse and keeping Headquarters fully informed about developments in that area".[2] Those early decades also saw the deployment of larger civilian presences to support political transitions, particularly in the context of decolonization and self-determination. For example, in 1949, the General Assembly established a United Nations Commissioner in Libya, mandated to assist the Libyan people in the formulation of a constitution and the establishment of an independent government.[3]

11. From the late 1960s until the end of the cold war, the Organization curtailed its design of new political missions. To a large extent, this was a result of the cold war divisions that hindered decision-making in the Security Council as well as the General Assembly. The number of missions mandated by the two bodies decreased during this period. While successive Secretaries-General continued to rely on special envoys and good offices missions, larger field-based civilian missions were rarely deployed.

12. One of the relatively few missions created in this period was that of the Special Representative to the Middle East, with a distinctly regional mandate that heralded the role of the present regional offices. The Special Representative was appointed in 1967 to maintain contacts with Member States in the region in order to achieve a peaceful settlement. He set up an office with political and military advisers, and engaged in shuttle diplomacy in subsequent years to the capitals of the region and beyond. The office operated until 1973.

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[1] General Assembly resolution 186 (S-2) of 14 May 1948.

[2] Ralph Bunche, statement to the 11th General Assembly of the International Press Institute, Tokyo, 25 March 1960.

[3] General Assembly resolution 289 (IV) of 21 November 1949.

13. The end of the cold war created new possibilities for the international community to maintain, collectively, its common security. At the same time, the post-cold war world saw the emergence of a number of new threats, including new civil wars in many regions. Post-cold war political transitions created increased demands for United Nations support, particularly in areas such as electoral assistance, constitution-making and the rule of law. From Central America to Africa, new missions were established to help Member States to meet those demands. The concepts behind the missions were not radically new, but rather a rediscovery of some of the models deployed by the Organization in earlier years.

14. Harking back to the smaller political offices established in the 1950s, the Organization relied on several similar missions in this period. This included the Special Mission to Afghanistan, deployed by the Secretary-General in 1993 at the request of the General Assembly, and mandated to canvass a broad spectrum of Afghan leaders and solicit their views on how the United Nations could best support national reconciliation and reconstruction. Also in 1993, a United Nations Office in Burundi was established to support peace and reconciliation initiatives in the country. In 1995, a similar model was applied with the creation of a United Nations Political Office for Somalia, aiming to assist Somalis "in coming together in national reconciliation".[4]

15. Electoral support was at the core of some political missions deployed in the late 1980s and 1990s, such as the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Electoral Process in Nicaragua, and the United Nations Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti.[5] An increased reliance on missions with more multidimensional mandates became evident in the 1990s and 2000s, through the deployment, for example, of the joint United Nations-Organization of American States International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH), the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and, later, the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN).

16. The diversity of the mission models explored during that period does not mean that they were all successful. In some cases, the missions had only a marginal impact on the situation on the ground, owing to political dynamics, lack of commitment by the parties, or weak capacity of the mission itself. Yet the different models of political missions that emerged during the period helped to frame, to a large extent, the types of special political missions we see today.

17. At the same time, there are important differences vis-à-vis contemporary special political missions, particularly in terms of the scope of mandates and activities carried out. The landscape today is more diverse than ever before, with a wide array of mission structures and functions deployed in different contexts. The mandates of special political missions have become broader and more complex. The next section will discuss the present role of special political missions in the activities of the Organization, and show how their evolution over the past two decades has led to the wide range of missions we see today.

[4] S/PRST/1995/15.

[5] Two peacekeeping operations in this same period also had electoral support tasks at the core of their mandates: the United Nations Transition Assistance Group, established by the Security Council to ensure the early independence of Namibia through free and fair elections, and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia.

III. The present role of special political missions in the peace and security activities of the Organization

Good offices, conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding

18. Special political missions share a common raison d'être: preventing and resolving conflict, as well as helping Member States and parties to a conflict to build a sustainable peace. It is this core function that defines these missions as "political".

19. The role of special envoys in conflict prevention and mediation is relatively well known. Envoys have traditionally relied on diplomatic means to defuse tensions and resolve disputes — border disputes, regional conflicts, constitutional problems, electoral crises and a host of other issues — and to support peace talks, in close cooperation with other United Nations presences on the ground, including peacekeeping operations. Special envoys often have multifaceted roles, as they can be called on to support longer-term processes such as national dialogues and political transitions. In Yemen, where the United Nations facilitated face-to-face negotiations leading to the signature in 2011 of the two-year road map for the transition, my Special Adviser now provides direct assistance to Yemeni stakeholders in the implementation of the road map, an important component of which is the ongoing inclusive national dialogue, with participation of women's groups. In the Sudan and South Sudan, my Special Envoy has worked closely with the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to facilitate discussions on outstanding aspects of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to resolve existing deadlocks. And my newly appointed Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, the first woman serving as a chief United Nations mediator, plays a key role, in close cooperation with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in supporting the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which was signed in February 2013 by 11 Member States in the region.

20. Perhaps less well known, but equally important, is the conflict prevention work of regional offices and resident political missions. United Nations regional offices — in West Africa, Central Africa and Central Asia — serve as forward platforms for good offices and preventive diplomacy, working with regional and subregional organizations, Member States and other partners to identify threats early and defuse tensions before they escalate. In Guinea, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) played a key role in facilitating the country's transition from military to constitutional rule in 2009-2010, working in partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia provided immediate good offices and support for crisis response in Kyrgyzstan following the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence in 2010. These offices have also played a key role in enhancing State and inter-State capacity in the fight against transnational threats — such as drug trafficking and organized crime in West Africa, or the fight against the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa — as well as in facilitating regional discussions and cooperation, for example, on water and energy issues in Central Asia.

21. Country-specific missions all accompany complex political or peace consolidation processes, and typically play a strong good offices role. Concretely,

the core political functions of these missions include tasks such as (a) promoting reconciliation, for example, in Afghanistan and Iraq; (b) conducting mediation and facilitation, for example, in the Middle East; (c) maintaining a sustained political dialogue with various stakeholders, for example, in Lebanon and Somalia; (d) providing electoral assistance and supporting efforts to prevent election-related violence, for example, in Libya and Sierra Leone; (e) coordinating donor assistance and mobilizing resources, for example, in Afghanistan, Guinea-Bissau and the Middle East; and (f) strengthening national capacities and supporting national priorities that are critical for a successful peacebuilding process, such as rule of law, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and mine action, for example, in Burundi, Libya, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

22. A recent example of the complex set of mandates entrusted to special political missions is the work accomplished on several fronts by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The mission played an important preventive role with regard to the ongoing relocation of residents from Camp Ashraf to Camp Hurriya, then to third countries; provided technical advice for the organization of the 2013 provincial and local elections; helped to mobilize resources for humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees; contributed to the establishment of the Iraqi Human Rights Commission; and maintained open lines of communication with various stakeholders, which proved critical in moments of increased political tensions. UNAMI also used its good offices role to facilitate the normalization of Iraq-Kuwait relations and Iraq's fulfilment of its outstanding Chapter VII obligations, effectively bringing Iraq closer to restoring the international standing it held prior to the Gulf War.

23. Given their political functions and the demands in the contexts where they are deployed, special political missions have become a critical peacebuilding tool of the United Nations. Four of the six countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission have special political missions, namely Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. There is an important and evolving institutional partnership between United Nations missions and the Peacebuilding Commission, the success of which is critical to ensuring sustained attention to post-conflict recovery. I have asked my Special Representatives to work closely with the Chairs of the country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission to build international support for agreed upon peacebuilding objectives and to mobilize the financial resources to implement this agenda, in collaboration with United Nations country teams and other actors on the ground.

24. Irrespective of their functions or structures, a common thread among special political missions is their focus on promoting national ownership at all stages of mandate implementation. Their work is based on the recognition that only national actors, through inclusive processes with the effective participation of women, can truly address the needs and goals of their societies in a sustainable way. In order to promote national ownership, the missions work closely with national counterparts to set priorities, strengthen local capacities and implement a jointly agreed agenda. The establishment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) provides a good example: UNSMIL was deployed, at the request of the Libyan authorities, for an initial period of three months — subsequently renewed for another three months — during which the United Nations, the transitional authorities and civil society deliberated the specific scope and nature of the assistance that the mission would provide. Those consultations ultimately formed the basis of the mandate adopted by

the Security Council in resolution 2040 (2012). In Nepal, the flexibility in tailoring the mandate and structure of UNMIN allowed the mission to respond to the host Government's preference that arms monitoring functions under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement be carried out by civilians instead of military personnel.

25. Increasingly, special political missions operate in environments where transnational organized crime and drug trafficking constitute a main driver of instability. Repeated cycles of political and criminal violence fuelled by drug trafficking and organized crime represent a grave threat to many countries, undermining peacebuilding efforts. In some cases, such as Somalia and the Sahel, we are seeing the increasing convergence of organized crime and terrorist groups. Several special political missions are seeking to develop responses to help address such threats, fully cognizant of the sheer complexity of the problem. For example, in West Africa, UNOWA, together with the five political and peacekeeping missions in the region, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL, has supported the West Africa Coast Initiative, a United Nations-ECOWAS partnership designed to enhance the capacity of Member States in the region to curb transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking.

26. A number of country-specific missions also have mandates to address transnational organized crime — for example, in Afghanistan, Guinea-Bissau, Libya and Sierra Leone. However, many United Nations missions are in need of more tools to play a role in this area, such as technical expertise, strategic and operational guidance, and analytical capacities. Despite the engagement of special political missions in supporting national partners in fighting drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, the sheer size of the market generated by these criminal activities dwarfs the capacity of host Governments and United Nations missions, as seen in Guinea-Bissau.

27. At times special political missions are deployed to address complex or seemingly intractable challenges when other actors are not able or willing to engage. In this, they play a vital function, even if success is far from guaranteed. Their effectiveness depends on a range of factors, including the commitment of the parties, the existence of political space in which to operate, and a minimum standard of security. Without this, special political missions are not able to achieve all their objectives. In the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, the lack of international, regional and domestic consensus has so far stood in the way of a negotiated solution, despite the best efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

28. Yet, even in instances when the odds of success seem very low, the continued political engagement of the United Nations is important. By remaining engaged, we are at times able to make use of even the smallest window of opportunity. This has been true in the case of Somalia, where the improvement in the security situation and the United Nations-supported establishment of a federal government allowed the Organization to relocate its mission from Nairobi to Mogadishu for the first time since 1995. However, security threats remain, as evidenced by the attacks of 19 June 2013 against the United Nations.

The current landscape of special political missions

29. At present, there are 37 special political missions (see annex for a full list), categorized in three main "clusters".

30. Cluster I refers to high-level envoys of the Secretary-General requested to carry out good offices and mediation functions. Today, there are 11 such missions. Most of these are Headquarters-based, like the Special Adviser on Myanmar, or home-based, like the Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region. Many have small offices stationed in the countries and regions where they work, for example, the Special Adviser on Cyprus, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria and the Special Adviser on Yemen.

31. Cluster II refers to sanctions monitoring teams, panels and other groups, of which there are currently 11. Five are based in New York, one in Nairobi, and five are home-based. Monitoring teams, groups and panels are composed of technical experts who monitor the implementation of Security Council resolutions and track and report on the sanctions measures imposed by the Council, such as, but not limited to, arms embargoes, asset freezes and travel bans. Areas of expertise in these monitoring teams, groups and panels include banking, finance and alternative remittance systems; conventional arms and armed groups; customs, export control and travel ban enforcement; information analysis and counter-terrorism; transport; international humanitarian law and human rights; natural resources; political analysis; and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. These teams, groups and panels report to the Security Council through the relevant committee (composed of Security Council members), while the Secretariat provides administrative and substantive support. Cluster II entities cooperate with Member States and a wide range of other stakeholders, including resident United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

32. Cluster III refers to field-based special political missions, including regional offices and country-specific missions. There are currently 15 such missions deployed around the world, with different structures and functions. Ten of these missions are based in Africa, four in the Middle East and one in Asia. Their sizes vary from small missions such as the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and regional offices such as the United Nations Office in Central Africa (UNOCA) to larger assistance missions deployed to countries where international military forces are present, such as UNAMI, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

33. A field-based special political mission in place in July 2013 has had an average duration of slightly less than six years. Some of the existing missions, however, were established to replace other special political missions, with a change in mandate.[6] The longest-lasting field-based special political mission was the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, created in 1995 and replaced on 3 June 2013

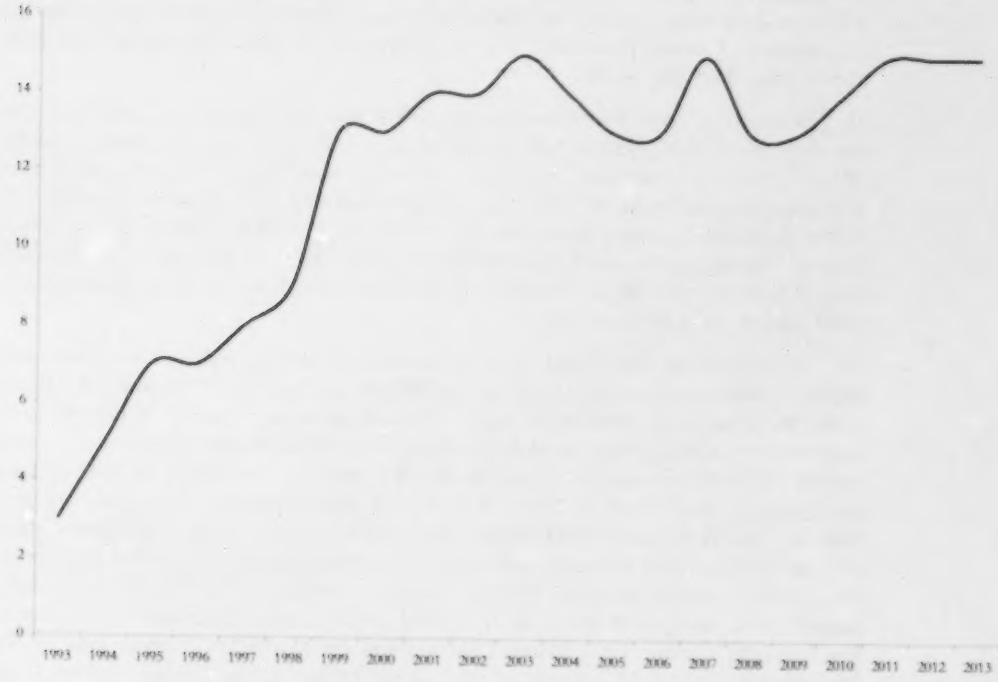
[6] For example, UNIPSIL was preceded by the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) (2005-2008); the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) was preceded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) (2000-2009); the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) was preceded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) (1999-2009); and the current United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB) was preceded by the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) (2007-2010).

by UNSOM.[7] Of the 37 current missions, 33 are mandated by the Security Council and 4 are mandated by the General Assembly.[8]

Trends

34. The evolution of field-based special political missions over the past two decades has been marked by three discernible trends: an increase in their overall number, an increase in their size and an increase in the complexity of their mandates.

Number of field-based special political missions per year



35. The number of field-based special political missions has grown steadily over the past 20 years (see figure). In 1993, there were only three political missions in the field. This number increased to 12 in 2000 and reached 15 in 2013. This growth occurred notwithstanding the fact that over half of the country-specific special political missions deployed since 1993 have already been liquidated.[9]

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[7] The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process was established in 1994 by the General Assembly, and remains in place.

[8] The General Assembly-mandated missions are the Special Adviser on Myanmar, the Office of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, the United Nations Office to the African Union and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The latter two missions are not funded from the special political missions section of the regular budget, but they perform similar functions to other special political missions and are also funded, fully or partially, from the regular budget.

[9] Furthermore, 11 additional missions transitioned into other special political missions.

36. The increase in the number of special political missions is only part of the story. Individually, the mandates of the missions have become significantly more complex than they were at the outset, when they had primarily reporting and monitoring tasks. Especially over the last decade, field-based special political missions have become manifestly multidimensional operations, in line with an expanding normative agenda, combining political tasks with a broader set of mandates in areas such as human rights, the rule of law, and sexual violence in conflict.

37. One area in which the normative agenda of special political missions has increased significantly is the role of women in peace and security, particularly since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Many special political missions have been involved in efforts to promote women's participation in conflict resolution and peace processes, and to incorporate a gender perspective in their overall peacebuilding work.

38. Whereas a field-based mission in 1995 had an average of less than two mandate areas, this number had increased to 3.5 by 2000 and to roughly six by 2013.[10] Different thematic mandates became more prevalent over time. For example, the percentage of field-based missions with security sector reform and rule of law mandates increased from none in 1995 to 30 per cent in 2000 to 60 per cent at present. Human rights mandates followed a similar trend: 28 per cent of field-based special political missions had human rights-related mandates in 1995, 38 per cent in 2000, and 60 per cent at present.

39. To implement this broad range of mandates, special political missions now require specialized expertise built up in different parts of the Organization. Owing to the increase in the number of tasks related to policing, the rule of law, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and mine action — nine special political missions have experts in these areas — the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, together with the United Nations Development Programme, are key service providers. Their role has recently been strengthened through the establishment of a global focal point arrangement, so that missions have a one-stop interface at Headquarters. Country support plans have been prepared for Libya and are being developed for Somalia. Similarly, the Electoral Assistance Division and the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, offer niche expertise in their respective areas.

40. In the field of electoral assistance, for example, there is increased recognition that elections are not isolated, technical events but rather part of a continuum of political dynamics and processes. Accordingly, there has been a conscious effort to design United Nations electoral support as part of a broader approach to promoting peace and stability, linked to other activities in support of peaceful transitions, good governance, rule of law, and human rights.

41. Special political missions have equally become more complex in terms of their structure. Some of the missions are deployed not only to capitals but also to other key locations in the country concerned to enable liaison with a broader spectrum of the population. A number of missions work increasingly with seconded military and

[10] Mandate areas are broad categories (such as human rights, security sector reform) that contain a number of more specific mandated tasks (such as human rights capacity-building, monitoring, legal support).

police personnel providing strategic and technical advice in their areas of expertise, or in partnership with non-United Nations military actors on the ground. For example, in Sierra Leone the United Nations police played an important role in advising regional police leadership and security committees at the province and district levels. Special political missions are more operational at the country level, implementing projects in support of national peacebuilding priorities, and have begun to benefit from the ability to receive support directly from the Peacebuilding Fund.

42. The increased use of special political missions has evolved hand in hand with transformations at Headquarters, in particular the decisions of the General Assembly to create the Department of Field Support and the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions in 2007 and to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs in 2008. The Department of Political Affairs is the main operational arm for the conduct of my good offices, and provides substantive backstopping to most special political missions. In order to better support the work of those missions, the Department has strengthened, with support from Member States, its analytical capacities and technical expertise in areas such as mediation, electoral assistance, lessons learned and best practices. It has also enhanced its partnerships with other actors engaged in political work in the field. As a result, it is able to respond more rapidly and effectively to the needs of field missions and to promote a more coherent political engagement by key actors.

IV. Key policy issues and challenges

43. This section examines some of the most relevant cross-cutting and thematic issues for today's special political missions. As requested in resolution 67/123, the focus is on overall policy issues. While special political missions still face important challenges related to administrative and budgetary matters, those issues lie within the remit of the Fifth Committee and are the subject of my report on the review of arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions (A/66/340).

Partnerships with regional and subregional organizations

44. Partnerships are critical for the successful implementation of the mandates entrusted to special political missions. Under Chapter VIII of the Charter, special political missions work closely with regional and subregional organizations to advance international peace and security. This partnership is based on a recognition that the United Nations and regional partners can have a multiplying effect by drawing on their comparative advantages. Regional organizations, because of their proximity to the situation on the ground and strong networks with national stakeholders, have the legitimacy and influence to play a critical role in preventing conflict and supporting political transitions.

45. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations can take many forms: missions working alongside regionally led peacekeeping operations, as does UNSOM; regional offices mandated to enhance regional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation, such as the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, UNOWA and UNOCA; joint special envoys appointed by the Secretary-General and regional partners, like the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria; and day-to-day cooperation between missions and regional organizations, like that between the

United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

46. The United Nations and regional organizations have recently taken a number of steps to codify and strengthen their cooperation. Formal cooperation agreements, joint missions, periodic desk-to-desk meetings and other mechanisms have been put in place to facilitate the building of more effective working relationships.

47. The establishment of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) has greatly strengthened the Organization's partnership with the African Union, allowing for greater coordination and cooperation in the area of peace and security. UNOAU maintains close contact with country-specific special political missions and peacekeeping operations in Africa, and has helped to coordinate United Nations-African Union responses to issues of common interest, including through the holding of periodic meetings between members of the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

48. While these partnerships are vital, they are not always without challenges. In some cases, the United Nations and regional organizations have different priorities, approaches or agendas. In addition, while a number of regional organizations are engaged in peace and security activities, they do not always have the capacities or resources to fully respond to challenges in their areas of responsibility. In other cases, the United Nations may not be the best actor to lead efforts in conflict prevention, peacemaking or peacebuilding. This means that a division of labour with regional partners needs to be carefully calibrated. There is also room to improve the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, and to jointly apply these lessons to new situations. In particular, collaboration and strategic coordination could be strengthened around early warning and early response to crises in many parts of the world.

System-wide coherence

49. Partnerships between special political missions and the wider United Nations system are critical for the implementation of a comprehensive approach linking security to social and economic development, to address the underlying drivers of each conflict, and to assist countries emerging from conflict in building a sustainable peace. Given the division of responsibilities within the United Nations system, integration between the mission and the various funds, agencies and programmes in the country requires a concerted effort to maximize the comparative advantages of different parts of the Organization.

50. In 2008, I endorsed a United Nations system-wide policy on integration in field missions, which emphasizes the importance of strategic cooperation between the missions and United Nations country teams and identifies necessary elements to achieve this, namely, joint assessment and planning tools and resources, and integrated task forces supporting these processes from Headquarters. The Peacebuilding Fund buttresses these efforts, having allocated US$ 170 million in countries with special political missions, using mechanisms that strengthen system-wide coherence.

51. Also in 2008, in recognition of the critical and complementary roles that our respective institutions play in supporting recovery from conflict, I signed, together with the then President of the World Bank, the United Nations-World Bank Partnership Framework for Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations. This partnership aims to foster strategic-level dialogue between the two institutions and more effective

joint responses in crisis and post-conflict contexts. In many cases, the World Bank already is a key interlocutor and partner of special political missions involved in a range of peacebuilding activities. In Yemen, for example, the World Bank has worked closely with my Special Adviser to support the national dialogue process.

52. In May 2013, the World Bank President and I carried out a landmark joint visit to the Great Lakes region, together with my Special Envoy to the region, to emphasize that the implementation of the political and security aspects of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework must go hand in hand with development. Despite the important progress achieved so far, we have only begun to tap into the potential of a strong United Nations-World Bank partnership. Special political missions, alongside United Nations country teams and peacekeeping operations, will play a central role in taking this cooperation to the next level.

Inter-mission cooperation

53. Special political missions work closely with other United Nations missions in the implementation of their mandates. Three types of relationship are particularly relevant: (a) between special envoys and peacekeeping operations; (b) between regional offices and other missions in their region; and (c) between different country-specific special political missions and peacekeeping operations.

54. Special Envoys have in some cases been appointed to complement the work of peacekeeping operations, particularly when there is a need to distinguish between peacekeeping and good offices duties. This practice dates back to the very first missions deployed by the Organization: Count Folke Bernadotte worked closely with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; later, in 1964, the Security Council recommended that the Secretary-General designate a mediator in the same resolution by which it established the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.[11] There are currently five Special Envoys who work alongside peacekeeping operations: the Special Adviser on Cyprus, the Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, the Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, the Special Envoy for the Sahel and the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan.

55. United Nations regional offices cooperate closely with different missions deployed in the region, be they peacekeeping operations or special political missions. In West Africa, UNOWA works with the missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone, including through inter-mission conferences among specialized staff and regular meetings among my Special Representatives. As the main interface with ECOWAS, UNOWA has been able to serve as a bridge between country-specific missions and Abuja. In Central Africa, UNOCA works with BINUCA, MONUSCO and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as with UNOAU and regional partners, to develop a regional strategy for international humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance in the area affected by the Lord's Resistance Army.

56. Country-specific special political missions and peacekeeping operations equally work with each other. Such cooperation often focuses on cross-border issues. For example, UNIPSIL, UNIOGBIS, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and UNOWA are involved in the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative, in support of

[11] Security Council resolution 186 (1964).

ECOWAS (see para. 25 above). In Lebanon, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon work together for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), with close liaison, information-sharing and coordination channels between heads of mission and substantive sections. In the recent past, there are also examples of special political missions and peacekeeping operations that were simultaneously deployed in the same country, with a distinction between the military mandates and the civilian mandates (MICIVIH, MINUGUA).

Delivering mandates in a volatile security environment

57. Over the past decade, special political missions have been operating in increasingly volatile security environments. Particularly since 2002, when UNAMA was established, special political missions have been called upon to deliver complex mandates in situations of active conflicts, or barely post-conflict contexts. At present, missions in the Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Yemen, in addition to Afghanistan, operate in areas with fragile security environments.

58. The security environment has direct consequences for a mission's ability to deliver its mandate, adversely affecting the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the discharge of their functions. Given their emphasis on national ownership, special political missions are expected to work closely with national counterparts — both governmental and non-governmental — in all aspects of mandate implementation. When the security situation deteriorates to a point where staff movement is restricted, those interactions are constrained, particularly at subregional levels.

59. In Iraq, in the aftermath of the Canal Hotel bombing in 2003, highly restrictive security measures were put in place, significantly reducing access, movement and interaction with counterparts in government and civil society. Similarly, in Afghanistan, the ability of UNAMA staff to engage with interlocutors in undertaking mandated tasks and activities has been increasingly restricted in different areas of the country because of security concerns. In Libya, the worsening of the security situation in 2012 led UNSMIL to relocate staff from the eastern part of the country, including the sub-office in Benghazi, which hindered the mission's ability to work with its interlocutors on important aspects of its mandate. In Somalia, the establishment of the new United Nations special political mission in the country requires a robust, flexible and differentiated menu of security management options to allow security arrangements to be tailored to individual tasks and locations. The terrorist attack of 19 June 2013 illustrated the critical importance of these arrangements.

60. In 2009, as part of the comprehensive review of the United Nations security management system, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination adopted a new strategic vision in security management. This vision shifted the Organization's approach from a "when to leave" to a "how to stay" stance, aimed at supporting the delivery of mandated programmes and activities, even in highly challenging situations. This new approach is based on the principles of "no programme without security" and "no security without resources".[12]

[12] See the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the Department of Safety and Security (A/67/526).

61. The host Government bears primary responsibility for the security and protection of United Nations personnel. Where the Government's capacity is weak or absent, special political missions have few security mechanisms at their disposal. Even in contexts where special political missions operate alongside multinational peacekeeping or enforcement operations, those forces often have other strategic priorities or limited capacity to protect United Nations personnel. All of this affects the ability of United Nations missions to deliver.

Transitions and exit strategies

62. The concept of United Nations transitions refers to a change in the configuration of the United Nations field presence on the ground in response to changing requirements and demands. United Nations transitions can happen in multiple directions: from a peacekeeping operation to a special political mission (Burundi); from a special political mission to a peacekeeping operation (Liberia); from a peacekeeping operation to the United Nations country team (Timor-Leste); and from a special political mission to the United Nations country team (Nepal). In general, the United Nations country team is present before, during and after the deployment of a special political mission. The sustainability of the success of any special political mission depends to a large extent on how well transitions to United Nations country teams are managed.

63. Transitional periods are particularly challenging for the Organization, demanding advance planning and coordination across the United Nations system. A system-wide policy on transitions in the context of mission drawdown and withdrawal has been developed to define responsibilities and decision-making steps.

64. Transitions underline the complementary nature of different United Nations configurations. Ultimately, the choice of the type of mission is based on the local demands and the needs of national authorities, as well as an assessment by the mandating body. The cases of Sierra Leone and Liberia provide useful examples of how the ability to deploy different types of United Nations configurations provides the Organization with flexibility to devise tailored responses.

65. In 1999, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a peacekeeping operation, because of the deterioration of the security situation in the country.[13] The Council subsequently established benchmarks for the drawdown of that peacekeeping presence, linked in particular to the restoration of State authority and peace consolidation. In 2005, the Secretary-General noted the considerable progress in the implementation of the benchmarks, and highlighted that the outstanding challenges would best be addressed by a smaller United Nations configuration tailored to post-conflict peacebuilding. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), a special political mission, was hence deployed in 2005.[14] In 2013, the Security Council welcomed the significant progress achieved by the Government and decided that the mission should fully withdraw by 31 March 2014, thus transitioning the United Nations configuration in the country to that of a United Nations country team.

[13] Prior to the deployment of UNAMSIL and its predecessor, the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), the United Nations political engagement in Sierra Leone was conducted through the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, a special political mission.

[14] Security Council resolution 1610 (2005).

66. In Liberia, the Organization underwent a number of transitions in its country configuration. Following the Cotonou Agreement that ended the civil war in 1993, the United Nations deployed an Observer Mission (UNOMIL), which worked alongside the ECOWAS Observer Group to monitor the implementation of the Agreement by all parties. After the successful implementation of the Mission's main task — the supervision of elections in July 1997 — the Mission's mandate was considered completed. On the basis of consultations with the Government of Liberia and the Security Council, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia, a special political mission, was established in 1997. This configuration was geared to support the post-conflict tasks, including national reconciliation and peace consolidation. However, the mission was ultimately unable to help local stakeholders to reach these objectives. In 2003 there was a deterioration of the security situation. Given the demand for security-related tasks, the Security Council subsequently decided to deploy a multidimensional peacekeeping operation to the country, the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

67. An important element of the life cycle of special political missions is their exit strategy, linked to the successful implementation of their mandate. In this regard, special political missions regularly assess the progress achieved in the implementation of their mandate, including in their reports to the Security Council and General Assembly. Four field-based special political missions — UNAMA, UNIOGBIS, UNIPSIL and BNUB — have benchmarks adopted by the Security Council, in close consultation with host Governments. Ultimately, deciding whether a particular mission has successfully accomplished its objectives and is ready to depart — leading to a transition to another United Nations configuration — is based on the assessment of the mandating body and the host Government.

Managing knowledge and learning lessons

68. A breadth of experience has been accumulated in the context of special political missions — in terms of both successes and failures. Knowledge management has thus become an important tool to capture that experience and apply it to ongoing and future operations. Over the past few years, the Organization has made considerable strides in improving its institutional learning in support of special political missions, identifying and analysing lessons, disseminating good practices, developing guidance, and providing training. While much more still needs to be done, such standardized processes did not exist five years ago.

69. Creating knowledge management systems has been critical in helping my Special Representatives gain access to the stock of good practices developed within the United Nations system. They also share knowledge in real time with each other. For example, in December 2012, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the Department of Political Affairs organized a lessons learned exercise involving the heads of the three regional offices, allowing them to compare notes on how they have helped to address complex trans-boundary issues in their respective regions, as well as on good offices and peacemaking tools they have used. Similarly, in 2009, the Department and the Center on International Cooperation organized a comprehensive workshop to review lessons learned from the experience of UNMIN.

70. In March 2013, the Department of Political Affairs carried out an in-depth review of its response to the crisis in the Central African Republic, with a view to

improving its support to field missions faced with similar challenges. The crisis highlighted some of the limitations that special political missions confront when the political and security situation deteriorates. While BINUCA had played an instrumental role in supporting the negotiations that led to the signing of the Libreville Agreements in January 2013, the mission — together with ECCAS, the African Union and interested Member States — was not able to ensure their implementation. Ultimately, this led to a resumption of armed confrontations among the parties and the takeover of Bangui by the Séléka rebels. I have asked BINUCA and UNOCA to work closely with various partners, including through the International Contact Group for the Central African Republic, to develop regional and international support for the transitional process.

71. Creating a culture of institutional learning is not without challenges, particularly given the significant operational demands placed upon special political missions and the Departments that backstop them at Headquarters. At the same time, the development of internal guidance has been important in ensuring that staff at the working level have the necessary knowledge framework to support special political missions. A recent example is the special political mission start-up guide prepared in 2012, which serves as a key reference document for staff working on the deployment of new missions. In addition, a number of system-wide policies have been recently produced, such as the policies on integrated assessment and planning, on transitions, on human rights in field operations and on human rights due diligence. The Electoral Assistance Division has also developed a series of electoral policies to ensure consistency and coherence across the United Nations system.

V. Elements of success and recommendations to improve the transparency and effectiveness of special political missions

72. The body of experience and best practices developed with regard to special political missions in the past two decades has highlighted a number of important elements of success. These factors contribute to the overall transparency and effectiveness of the missions, in particular their ability to implement complex mandates, in support of national stakeholders.

73. *National ownership*. Special political missions work in support of domestic efforts to resolve conflicts and build a sustainable peace. Only national actors can address the needs and goals of their societies in a sustainable way. **Special political missions must continue to work closely with national stakeholders to set priorities, build domestic capacities and implement a common agenda.**

74. *Flexibility*. Conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping are highly diverse tasks that require a case-by-case approach, well tuned to local dynamics and needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to the design of the missions would lead to overly static structures that are out of touch with the demands on the ground. **Special political missions should be tailored to local contexts and needs, and sufficiently flexible to evolve in accordance with those needs.**

75. *Rapid response*. The fast-paced environment of peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives demands that special political missions be agile in responding to changes on the ground. In a peace process, even minor delays could mean missing a unique window of opportunity for a settlement. In post-conflict

settings, the window of opportunity closes quickly. **Special political missions should be able to deliver promptly in order to make long-term gains in peace consolidation.**

76. *Leveraging comparative advantages*. It is critical to understand which contexts are suited for special political missions, and when other configurations, such as peacekeeping operations, are more appropriate. Special political missions have limitations, and are not designed to address all kinds of threats to international peace and security. **The respective comparative advantages of different United Nations configurations should be assessed in the light of the situation on the ground and the needs of national authorities.**

77. *Partnerships*. Partnerships with regional and subregional organizations are a critical tool for the success of special political missions. Strengthening those partnerships will remain a top priority of the Organization, and a key concern of my Special Representatives on the ground. **When requested, the United Nations should remain ready to provide capacity-building and technical assistance to its regional partners.**

78. *System-wide coherence*. Given the cross-cutting nature of the complex mandates entrusted to special political missions, an integrated and coherent United Nations response, both at Headquarters and in the field, is critical for a mission's success. **We should continue to strengthen the ability of United Nations missions to deliver an integrated and joined-up United Nations response, linking political work and security with the longer-term development agenda.**

79. *Dialogue with Member States*. Given the importance of special political missions in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding, dialogue with Member States is critical for their success. Detailed information on special political missions is provided in my regular reports to the Security Council, as well as in my reports to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. **We should ensure regular inclusive and interactive exchanges on overall policy matters related to special political missions in order to promote closer collaboration with Member States, as requested in General Assembly resolution 67/123.**

80. In conclusion, special political missions have become an indispensable instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security. They are also the most visible manifestation of the Secretary-General's good offices. As they are deployed in complex and at times volatile environments, success is often difficult to achieve. Yet the record of the missions speaks for itself: they have demonstrated their ability to defuse tensions, help countries to step back from the brink of conflict, and support national efforts to build a sustainable peace.

81. Given the breadth and complexity of what special political missions are being asked to deliver, strong Member State support remains a critical ingredient of their effectiveness.

82. I would like to pay a tribute to my Special Representatives and Special Envoys as well as to the dedicated and courageous United Nations staff serving in these missions, who often work under difficult conditions in support of peace, security and development.

Annex

United Nations special political missions (as at 1 July 2013)

Special Envoys

1. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
2. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region[a]
3. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar
4. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
5. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel
6. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan
7. Office of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria
8. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
9. Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Yemen
10. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)
11. United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions

Sanctions panels and monitoring groups

1. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea
2. Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire
3. Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
4. Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
5. Panel of Experts on the Islamic Republic of Iran
6. Panel of Experts on Liberia
7. Panel of Experts on Libya
8. Panel of Experts on the Sudan
9. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1526 (2004) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
10. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
11. Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) [concerning the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction]

Field-based missions

1. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
2. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process[b]
3. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
4. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
5. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
6. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic
7. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
8. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
9. United Nations Office in Burundi
10. United Nations Office for Central Africa
11. United Nations Office for West Africa
12. United Nations Office to the African Union[b]
13. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
14. United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
15. United Nations Support Mission in Libya

[a] Funded from the "unforeseen" account until 31 December 2013.
[b] Funded from the regular budget but technically not part of the special political mission budgetary category.